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Agenda item 8

DRAFT REPORT

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Addendum

PROGRAMME QUESTIONS: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1998-1999 (item 4 (a))

Section 17. Economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific

1. At its 19th meeting, on 24 June 1997, the Committee considered section 17, Economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999.

Discussion

2. Several delegations reaffirmed their support for the multifaceted role of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and its commitment to the development of the region and expressed full support for the proposed programme budget. They noted that the budget document was detailed and concise and clearly highlighted the priorities in the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 and the activities to be undertaken.

3. Some delegations expressed concern that the proposed resources were not commensurate with the development needs of the countries of the region. They emphasized that reform should not reduce the Commission's capacity to deliver services but rather be conducive to increased efficiency. Several delegations welcomed the increase in resource growth for substantive activities under the section on the programme of work.

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4. One delegation noted with concern the increase in the overall resources requested under the section and considered that resources should decrease as a result of the streamlined structure derived from the reform process.

5. A number of delegations expressed support for the promotion of international cooperation in the region and the reinforcement of inter-agency collaboration through the Regional Inter-Agency Committee for Asia and the Pacific and its subcommittees. Other delegations noted with appreciation the Commission's great contribution to the international community and to the needs of its member countries, in particular its assistance to countries with economies in transition in Central Asia through technical assistance and advisory services in the areas of macroeconomic reform, transport, trade and investment. Satisfaction was also expressed for the inclusion of activities related to the participation of the private sector in development, the alleviation of poverty, the promotion of science and technology and human resources development. Some delegations stressed the need for the Commission to continue its lead role in infrastructure development to facilitate intraregional trade, and the development of transport and communications linkages.

6. A number of delegations emphasized the need to strengthen the Commission's role in operational activities, particularly technical assistance and advisory services, and to pay special attention to the needs of least developed and landlocked countries, island developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

Conclusions and recommendations

[7. The Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly that it approve the programme narrative of section 17, Economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999.]